



## **How to Engage in Conversation with Someone with Dementia**

Engaging in conversation with someone with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or other dementia can be a difficult area to navigate, especially when the person is in the moderate to late stages of the disease. Being able to communicate effectively is the most important ability we learn as humans. Communicating effectively with a person with dementia is even more important, as communication leads to a greater connection and foundation of trust. When the person with dementia is your loved one, your previously enjoyed everyday conversation with them may change, as the disease progresses and they can no longer keep up with your reality. While each person and situation is different, here are a few suggestions to help you enhance your communication with your loved one suffering from dementia. <br/>

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### **<strong>Start with Your Body Language</strong>**

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We've all heard the saying, "It's not what you said, but how you said it." According to [BodyLanguage Expert](#), communication is 55% body language. Communicating effectively with a person living with dementia starts with a relaxed body and facial expressions. Sudden movements or tense, angry facial expressions can cause your loved one to feel upset or distress. When they feel upset, they are going to have a more difficult time listening to you. Take a few deep breaths before you visit your loved one living with dementia, relax your body, and greet your loved one with a warm smile, so that you set yourself up for a successful visit. <br/>

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### **<strong>Speak Clearly and Use Simple Language</strong>**

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Often a person living with dementia also has other physical limitations, such as poor vision or poor hearing. Communicating with someone who is hard of hearing is difficult enough, but to add dementia on top of that can be very challenging. When communicating with your loved one with dementia, slow down your speech, speak clearly, and use simple language that they can understand. You don't need to dumb down everything you say; however, avoid using modern catch-phrases that they may not be familiar with. Avoid mumbling and try to avoid loud areas that only make it more difficult for a person living with dementia to hear and respond. <br/>

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### **<strong>Learn Their Trigger Words, Phrases, or Conversation Topics and Redirect</strong>**

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A person living with dementia is not subject to our reality. In their own mind, they are experiencing their own reality. Their reality may include deceased family members, former occupations, or their own version of how they arrived to where they are living today. When your loved one begins to get upset, acknowledge their feelings and then change the topic of conversation. Suggest going for a walk, ask them to help you with a task, or engage in a hobby they enjoy. <br/>

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### <strong>Listen Effectively </strong>

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Just as the speaker's body language is important, so is the listening ability of the receiver. When you are communicating with your loved one with dementia, listen actively to what they are saying. Put aside other distractions in order to give your loved one your complete attention. As dementia progresses, your loved one may experience word loss and may replace crucial words in their sentence with other non-related words. They may draw a blank in the middle of their sentence as they try to search for the right word. Give them a moment to find their words, before jumping in to complete their thoughts for them. Listen not only to what they are saying, but how they are saying it, observing their own body language. Respond to their emotional state by giving them a reassuring hug or warm smile. <br/>

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### <strong>Take One Topic at a Time</strong>

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A person living with dementia has difficulty multitasking. They need to be given one direction at a time before moving on to the next step. The same is true when it comes to topics of conversation. When you're talking with your loved one, focus on one topic at a time. Avoid bouncing back and forth between topics of conversation. Allow your loved one to take the lead in conversation topics by watching their facial expressions. If one topic seems overwhelming or too abstract for them, move on to something more in the moment. <br/>

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### <strong>Reminisce</strong>

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Some of the best conversations with a person living with dementia revolve around reminiscing about the good ol' days. If you are at a loss as to what to talk about with your loved one, try reminiscing. Ask them questions about their childhood or life as an early adult. Share old photographs with them and let them tell you stories about the events in the photographs. It's ok if they don't remember the past accurately; the purpose of reminiscing is to bring a smile to your loved one's face.<br/>

[Visiting Angels of Fort Worth](#) understands the challenges that come with a dementia diagnosis. A person diagnosed with dementia relies heavily upon their family for comfort and support, and feels most comfortable in familiar surroundings. Fortunately, at Visiting Angels, we offer [Dementia Care Services](#) that provide you and your loved one with the support you need. Our caregivers are compassionate and receive specialized training designed specifically for those who are living with dementia. With the care provided by our Angels, your loved one can remain at home in their familiar environment, while giving you a respite to attend to the other responsibilities in your life. [Give us a call](#) today to set up a free consultation.

Visiting Angels of Fort Worth, TX

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